

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 17, 2005

The Honorable David L. Hobson  
Chairman  
House Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Energy and Water Development  
2362 RHOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Peter J. Visclosky  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Energy and Water Development  
2362 RHOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Hobson and Ranking Member Visclosky:

As members of the Upper Mississippi River Congressional Task Force concerned about the health of our nation's rivers, we urge the Subcommittee **to support President Bush's Fiscal Year 2006 budget request of \$33.5 million for the Upper Mississippi River System Environmental Management Program (EMP)**. We fully concur with the president's assessment of the EMP as a national priority, equal in importance to the more widely known Everglades Restoration Project, and believe that the proposed funding level would enable major progress towards a healthier Upper Mississippi River System (UMRS), which encompasses some 1300 miles of the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers in the States of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin.

The purpose of EMP is to offset damages to the environment caused by the construction of navigation and flood control projects in the UMRS. Without increased funding for the EMP, river habitat will continue to be lost and the hundreds of species that depend upon the health of the Mississippi will struggle to survive. Far more than fish and wildlife are at stake -- millions of visitors annually spend billions of dollars on recreation along the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers, supporting thousands of jobs. The Mississippi river system provides drinking water for millions of Americans and serves as a cultural icon linking river residents and visitors to America's past.

In addition, the Task Force also supports the president's budget request for key basin-wide navigation and flood control projects and programs, including Operations and Maintenance activities in the UMR Navigation system and the major rehabilitation projects on the lock and dam system. The proposed increases to Operations and Maintenance allocations to the St. Paul, St. Louis, and Rock Island Districts are necessary to address the mounting critical backlog of O&M projects in the UMR system. Adequate funding for all these programs, along with the EMP, is vital to achieving Congress' vision of the Upper Mississippi as a "nationally significant ecosystem and a nationally significant commercial navigation system."

We urge the Committee to give full consideration to our request and thank you for your attention to these important programs. If you have any questions, please have your staff contact Darin Schroeder with Rep. Ron Kind at 202-225-5506 or Eric Keber with Rep. Gil Gutknecht at 202-225-2472.

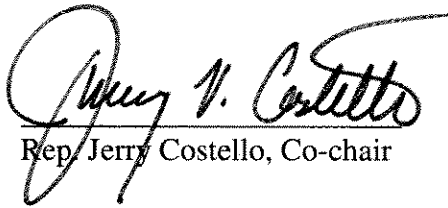
Sincerely,



Rep. Ron Kind, Co-chair



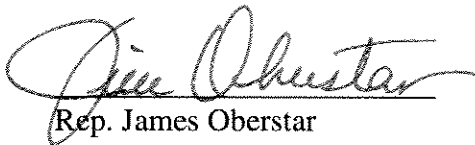
Rep. Gil Gutknecht, Co-chair



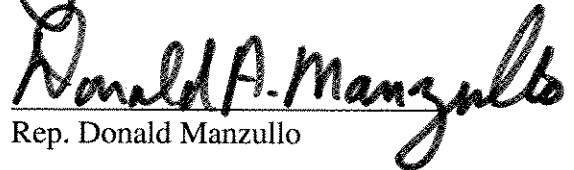
Rep. Jerry Costello, Co-chair



Rep. James Leach, Co-chair



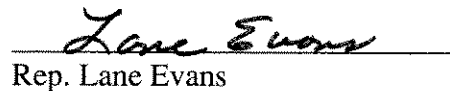
Rep. James Oberstar



Rep. Donald Manzullo



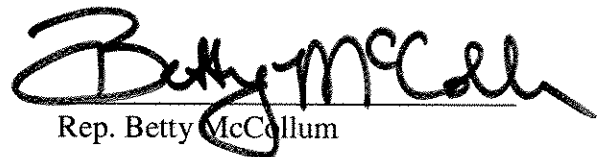
Rep. Leonard Boswell



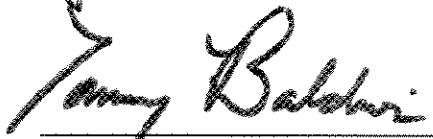
Rep. Lane Evans



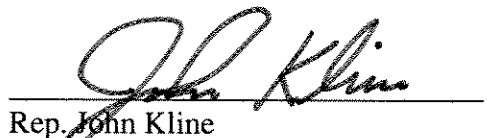
Rep. John Shimkus



Rep. Betty McCollum



Rep. Tammy Baldwin



Rep. John Kline



Rep. Daniel Lipinski

